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HISTORIAN

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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

October 1997

OCTOBER HAPPENINGS

It is the time of year again for our annual historical tour of the Cedar Rest Cemetery. As is traditional, the tour will be conducted from 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. on Halloween night, October 31.

Guests will gather at the central entrance to Cedar Rest on 2nd Street where they will be conducted in guided groups through the cemetery. More than a dozen actors will portray prominent citizens from our past. Often, the person they are portraying is one of their own ancestors.

Tours are conducted through a votive-candle lighted pathway and require about 45 minutes to complete. Donations are received at the entrance by Nearly Departed, a beloved Historical Society member. Afterward, punch and candy are offered around the corner at the Kate Lobrano House at 108 Cue Street.

The purpose of the event is three-fold; one, it is an interesting outing for the society; two, it serves to protect the cemetery on this night when it is especially vulnerable; three, it teaches the history of the area to both young and old in a very gentle manner. Try it, you'll like it.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is time for election of officers to serve on the Board of Directors of the Historical Society, voting will be held at the November meeting, installation at the December meeting. If you would like to serve on our board, please, please call
(Continued on page 3)



General Benjamin Franklin "Beast" Butler

From *The Mississippi Gulf Coast: Portrait of a people* by Charles L. Sullivan

Letters from an Enemy General to his Wife

Following are letters between Republican (Carpet-bagger) Governor of Mississippi, Adelbert Ames at Shieldsboro (Bay Saint Louis) and his wife Blanche Butler Ames. Mrs. Ames was the daughter of U.S. Major General Benjamin F. Butler, the Union general most hated by Southerners.

Gov. Ames to Mrs. Ames

"August 11, 1873, Shieldsboro
"I came out here yesterday from New Orleans. Riding out on the cars yesterday afternoon I watched for alligators in

the water in the excavations by the track. I saw half a dozen or so.

"Just before reaching this station we passed Montgomery Station and saw the ground on which Cooley and Rhett fought a duel a month ago, in which Cooley was killed.

"Everybody lives on oysters and fish here. Such, at least, has been my diet last night at supper and this morning at breakfast. There is to be a regatta today. The place is crowded. I occupied one of five beds in the same room last night. I have protested this morning, and will get one

by myself today. I send to my beautiful wife love, which she will share with our babies [son Butler and daughter Edith]."

Gov. Ames to Mrs. Ames

"August 12, 1873, Shieldsboro

"Yesterday we had a boat race here, which proved quite interesting. We took our stand on board a Revenue Cutter which was lying at one of the piers. Just as the boats were to start, a rain squall came up.

"The start was delayed, but two boats at different times tried to move about (under sail) and were capsized, but no one was hurt.

"Finally the boats which had met with no accident started. The contest was between a New York built boat and a fleet of boats built here. The N.Y. boat took the lead and kept it for four or five miles, when she capsized in a squall, nobody hurt. The race was finally won by a boat built at this place.

"This is my second day here, and I rather enjoy this quiet. The people are mainly from the south of Europe and French. You hear a foreign language spoken everywhere.

"It is very unlike Mississippi. Down here on the coast they do not seem to care or even know much of Mississippi or any other kind of politics. In this particular it is more pleasant than up country where every Democrat looks upon you and treats you as an enemy.

"The weather, save the heavy rain yesterday has been very pleasant and comfortable."

Gov. Ames to Mrs. Ames

"August 26, 1874, Shieldsboro

"Our arrangements are definitely made to sail out to the islands tomorrow. Ship Island will be one of those we propose to visit. This I shall view with interest, as one whereon your Father and Mother flourished a dozen years ago."

(Note: U.S. Major Gen. Benjamin F. Butler with Mrs. Butler (formerly Sarah Hildreth) were on the island from March to 1st May 1862 commanding U.S. troops which occupied New Orleans, La. With them was her sister Maria Hildreth Parker married to Ship Island Postmaster for U.

S., John Parker who had a similar position at New Orleans and in 1874 still lived in N.C. Andrew J. Butler, brother of Gen. Benj. Butler, also stayed in New Orleans vicinity until Ben. Butler departed December 1862. Mrs. Gen. Butler feared yellow fever and left New Orleans in June 1862).

Gov. Ames to Mrs. Ames

"August (no day given) 1875

".... I am back again to Jackson as you see. The weather at Bay St. Louis was more oppressive than here. I felt it more because I was on the street nearly all the time, going to and returning from meals.

"The Bay is eminently a French town. I met all the people at the hotel and found them a French-speaking people. The private boarding houses and their occupants are French also.

"I like the place all the better for it. They are far superior to the whiskey drinking, pistol carrying Anglo-Saxons of this latitude.

"The Bay is the best place in the state to live...."

Gov. Ames to Mrs. Ames

"August 20, 1874, New Orleans

"...I am going to tell you now something that will surprise you. Prepare yourself. I have asked a friend at Bay St. Louis to buy for me a house and some sixty acres of land, which are to be sold on the first of September at auction sale, by order of the court - provided the purchase can be made for three thousand dollars.

"Monday I rode out to see the place. It is a mile and a half from the depot, not in the best situation for the sea breezes, but good for bathing, and far better than Natchez for any and everything.

"The house is two-story brick. It was built about twenty years ago at a cost, it is said, of thirty thousand dollars. Whether this be true or not, the bricks in it are worth almost three thousand dollars. Love for my beautiful wife and babies."

Gov. Ames to Mrs. Ames

"August 29, 1874, Shieldsboro

"We had a very pleasant sail. We started at four o'clock in the morning and

returned at two o'clock the next morning. The wind was light almost the entire day, and we did not arrive at Ship Island until after sunset.

"The wind was ahead, and when a mile to the leeward of the Lighthouse beating up to it the full moon rose behind the island, and made the scene quite beautiful, as well as unique.

"As we moved along, the moon would at one time be behind the Lighthouse, at another behind the Fort, and again behind the buildings between the Fort and the Lighthouse, which were built for, and once occupied by our troops.

"We landed, and lighted by the moon and a lantern carried by the keeper of the lighthouse, we walked through the deserted street formed by the officers' quarters, and soldiers' barracks on either hand, to the Fort, which we inspected. It is in perfect condition, and last winter some guns were mounted on its parapet.

"The buildings used by the troops as quarters are fast falling to decay. The wind has drifted sand about like snow. Some of the houses have been undermined, while others have been banked up.

"There is one house they said was your Father's HdQrs; though my impression is that he lived in tents or some temporary wooden house he could and did transport from place to place.

"I recalled much I had heard of the sojourn there of your parents, and also some of (Col.) Kinsman's narrations, and withal enjoyed the moonlight visit much - though there was a feeling of sadness - a lonesomeness always incident to visits to scenes where those we know have been, especially when every step indicates decay.

"I found an old artillery sergeant who is in charge of the fort, acting as Lighthouse Keeper. He has a family there - five children - and aside from his assistant there is no one else on the island.

"We had a drink of excellent milk and started at nine o'clock on the way back."

Gov. Ames to Mrs. Ames

"November 7, 1874, Shieldsboro

"Offered \$3500 for Boulange place with only \$335 cash and pay interest on \$3165 mortgage but lady wants \$4500.

Mrs. Ames to her mother,
Mrs. Butler in Washington, D.C.

"March 20, 1874, New Orleans
"Furniture is being sold at auction for a song. It does not seem right to allow such opportunities to pass. The people are so poor they cannot buy anything."

Mrs. Ames to Mrs. Butler

"April 5, 1875, Bay St. Louis
"We came over yesterday from New Orleans. The house is not yet ready for us, but will be so in a day or so. I thought we could hasten the work by being here and have it done more satisfactorily.

"Here it is very delightful. The house looks directly over the water to Ship Island, and the glare of the sunlight on the waves is softened by the trees, which grow to the edge of the shore.

"The rooms in the house are high studded, large, and will be quite tasteful when furnished. The roses are all in full bloom, and the orange trees filled with fragrant blossoms. "It is a place where one ought to be content to wait the coming of the Lord"

Mrs. Ames to Mrs. Butler

"May 20, 1875, Bay St. Louis
"Your letter came yesterday and although you urge our departure North most eloquently, still we must adhere to our first determination to remain until the 11 of June.

"As far as the weather is concerned we have no need to hurry for nothing could be more delightful than these days and nights.

"The only drawback to this place is in the shape of gnats, flies and mosquitoes.

A gentleman by the name of [J.F.H.] Claiborne wished to be remembered to Father."

(Governor Ames was impeached following the elections in 1876. Advertisements appeared in the newspapers in Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis and St. Paul, though the mention of the former owner's name was dropped after the initial publications appeared.)

One of the advertisements read, "Winter residence in the South. For sale or

rent. At Bay St. Louis. Within two hours and a half of New Orleans. The Seaside residence of Governor Ames of Mississippi. It is a pleasant house with grounds and out-buildings, and is within a few rods of the water. Bay St. Louis is an old French town. Orange culture and fishing are the principle employment of the people. Rent for six months ending May 1st, \$300. Price \$6000."

Former Gov. Ames to
Mrs. Ames in Northfield, Minn.

"March 5, 1877, Chicago
"I exchanged my houses at Natchez and Bay St. Louis for property here. With my two houses I gave two thousand dollars. I get in exchange a block of six two-story houses at the corner of Ashland avenue and Hubbard street."

From *CHRONICLES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY*: Family letters compiled by Blanche Butler Ames, 1935 Vol. II 1874-1899.

PRESIDENT, from page 1
the office and let us know.

The offices that will be vacant are President, Second Vice President, Recording Secretary and Historian. The terms of office are for two years. The office of Corresponding Secretary has been eliminated and those duties assumed by Mrs. Karen Flores, Executive director of the Kate Lobrano House. If you are interested in any of these positions, we will be happy to fill you in on the details of the job. The names of nominees will appear in the November *HISTORIAN*.

Charles H. Gray

NEW MEMBERS

E. L. Herman, Diamondhead
Mrs. E. L. Herman, Diamondhead
Ms. Valerie Laine, Bay Saint Louis
Mrs. Jennifer Boatner, Gulfport
Ms. Victoria Asercion, Diamondhead
Ms. Sally Ann Asercion, Diamondhead
Tom Nash, Charlotte, NC
Ms. Patty Hayden, Lawrence, Kansas

LONG BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY REPORTS GROWTH

Our friends at the newly-founded Long Beach Historical Society must be doing everything right. Mary Ellen Alexander, their president, reports that they already have a membership of 190 and are growing. Congratulations, Mary Ellen. Also, they have published a delightful *Pictorial Memories Historical Callender* for 1998 which they are selling to raise funds. Phone 863-2387.

LOST AND FOUND

There was a silver children-holding-hands bracelet left at the Lobrano House at the last luncheon meeting.

HALLOWEEN REFRESHMENTS

Reminder to those who offered cookies, cupcakes and candy: Please bring them to Kate Lobrano House anytime between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Oct. 31

LOBRANO HOUSE HOURS

Monday	8 a.m.
through	to
Friday	4 p.m.

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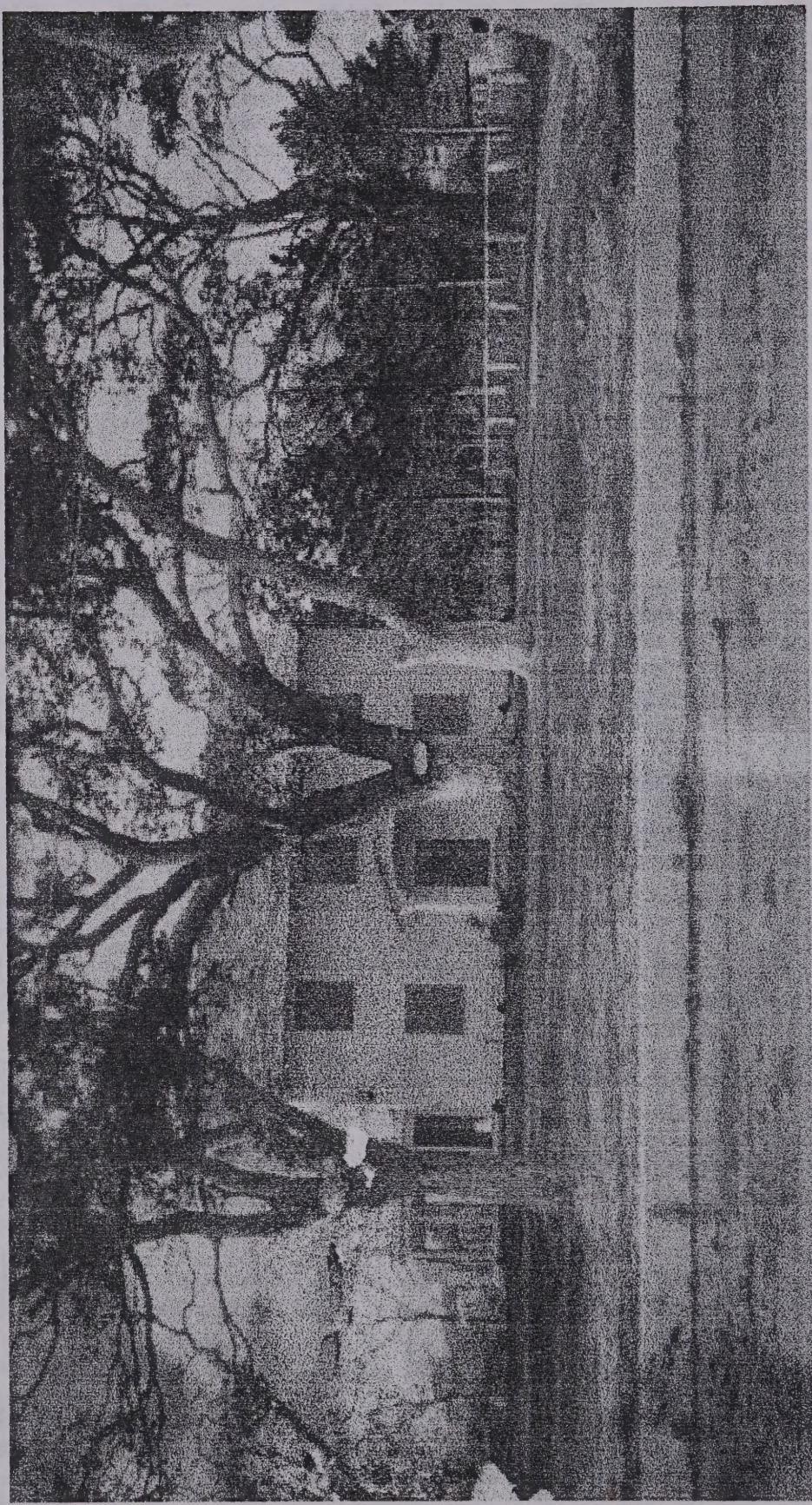
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DO YOU KNOW THIS HOUSE ?

The name J. R. Nix appears on the photograph. The sign on the tree reads "Beatrice Villa". Half moons are cut into the shutters. Phone 467-4090



HISTORICAL SOCIETY SUPPORTERS

WE APPRECIATE THE SUPPORT THAT THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS HAVE GIVEN TO THE
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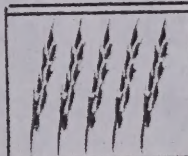


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